

423 from Bang Chan, the figure is as high as 85 percent (Dobby 1950). In
 184 these terms, therefore, it is best to view the incidence of land tenancy in
 Bang Chan as largely a function of local, historical circumstances.

369 A final word should be said about Bang Chan's proximity and ac-
 177 cessibility to Bangkok—the cornucopia of so much that is new, interesting,
 and desirable (if somewhat equivocally) to most Siamese peasants. It is
 clear that Bang Chan's closeness to the capital creates certain conditions
 that would not be present in a community situated, for example, 200
 kilometers, instead of 31 kilometers, from the nation's largest city. Simply
 on practical grounds, this nearness to the city permits the villagers to take
 advantage of opportunities—economic, recreational, and religious—which
 those living in distant provinces can obtain only after serious consideration
 of the financial and psychological expenses involved: "Do I have shoes to
 wear in the city? Do they treat people from the provinces well? With whom
 will I stay? Do I have the train fare?" A Bang Chaner who visits the capital
 (494) does not have to make such financial or emotional commitments, since it is
 only a one hour, three and one-half baht (seventeen and one-half cents)
 bus ride back home, although many do share with their up-country cousins
 the peasant's apprehensions about city manners.

The attractions of Bangkok take several forms: off-season jobs, medical
 care, kinship ties, special schools, great market places, famed monasteries or
 fairs, and the many other places where one can go to have fun. A survey
 (484) conducted in Bang Chan during 1955 (Goldsen and Ralis 1957) indicates
 that 62 percent of all household heads in the village visited Bangkok more
 than twice during the year for just such purposes. (Twenty-one percent
 had not gone to Bangkok at all, and 23 percent had gone more than ten
 times.) Many villagers, particularly younger men, attracted by the promise
 of regular wages, lighter work, and the bright lights of the city, leave Bang
 Chan with the hope that they will never have to return, although of course
 (464) many do. The Goldsen-Ralis survey reveals that 26 percent of their re-
 spondents had lived in Bangkok for a year or more, although for most this
 (701) was in fulfillment of military service.

369 Living in Bangkok is not something that is desired in and of itself. Bang
 177 Chaners are keenly aware of the disadvantages of city living—particularly
 181 its great expense and insecurity—and are impressed only by those indi-
 viduals who have made a success out of their urban sojourn. Most would
 agree that a Bangkok coolie, for all his exposure to the wonders of the
 modern world, lives a considerably less attractive life than they do.

369 The frequent transit between Bang Chan and Bangkok,^a however,
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(207) ^a Of less practical consequence than their direct personal experiences and word-
 of-mouth contacts, but not to be ignored, are the villagers' contacts with Bangkok by
 (204) way of radio, newspapers, books, and of course by way of what their children bring
 (871)

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continually brings to the attention of the villagers urban standards and aspirations which, whenever possible, they attempt to apply to themselves. L. M. Hanks (1959b: 19) sees the operation of this characteristic acculturative mechanism in Bang Chan in terms of the villagers' "search for respectability": "A respectable cremation requires an orchestra; a respectable dwelling a tile roof; a respectable sickness an injection; and a respectable family must chaperone carefully its growing daughters. So run a host of points which help to bolster but not necessarily to advance social position."

Yet, after the relationship between village and town has been considered, Bang Chan remains very much a peasant community, whose residents are concerned first and foremost with the cultivation of rice, the maintenance of their monastery, and their own immediate social environment. Despite aspirations, many Bang Chan cremations must go without the orchestra; most dwellings lack the tile roof; injections are taken only by those who can afford them; and the necessity for boys and girls to work together during harvest time, a period of unavoidably infectious joy, precludes any rigidly imposed chaperonage. Perhaps the best assessment of the cultural position of Bang Chan was provided by the writer's field assistant—an individual born and reared in a village in the Northeast who, although in many respects worldly and urbane, maintained an almost passionate identification with his peasant background—who said: "When I first came here to Bang Chan, I never thought that people living so close to Bangkok could be *real* Thai villagers. But they are. They are not as friendly and hospitable as Northeastern peasants, and they are more interested in money, but they have a much greater love of the land. No city person could ever think and feel as they do."

Family Life and Social Organization

In terms of the traditional categories of social structural analysis, the social organization of Bang Chan is strikingly simple. There are essentially only five social units which demand, and toward which villagers express, relatively enduring psychological commitments. These are the nuclear family;

home from school, the curriculum for which is written and directed by Ministry of Education officials in the city. Approximately 14 percent of Bang Chan households have battery driven radios (there is no electricity in the village) and approximately 60 percent of the villagers can read, although considerably fewer actually have the proficiency to go comfortably through a newspaper; theoretically the same number of people can write, but few Bang Chan adults have the courage to take pencil to paper without feeling discomfort over their handwriting, spelling, and knowledge of stylistic forms. Newspapers that people bring home from town are passed around and read more for their entertainment than information; the few books that are seen in the village are pulp magazines, religious or moralistic writings, and occasionally do-it-yourself pamphlets ("How to Raise Chickens the Modern Way").